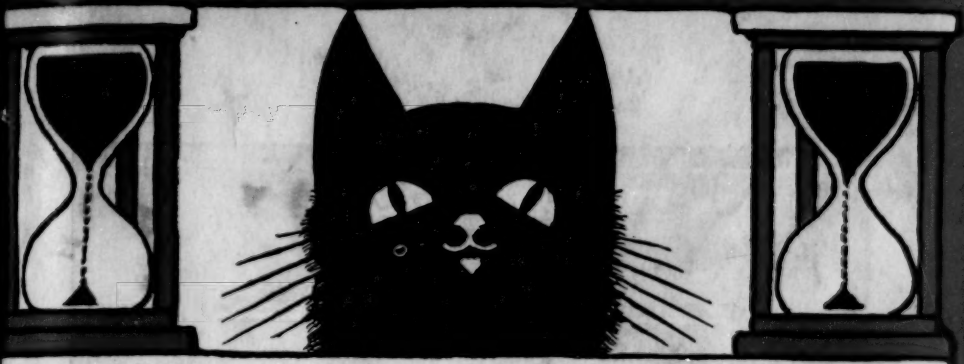

The Black Cat

January 1907

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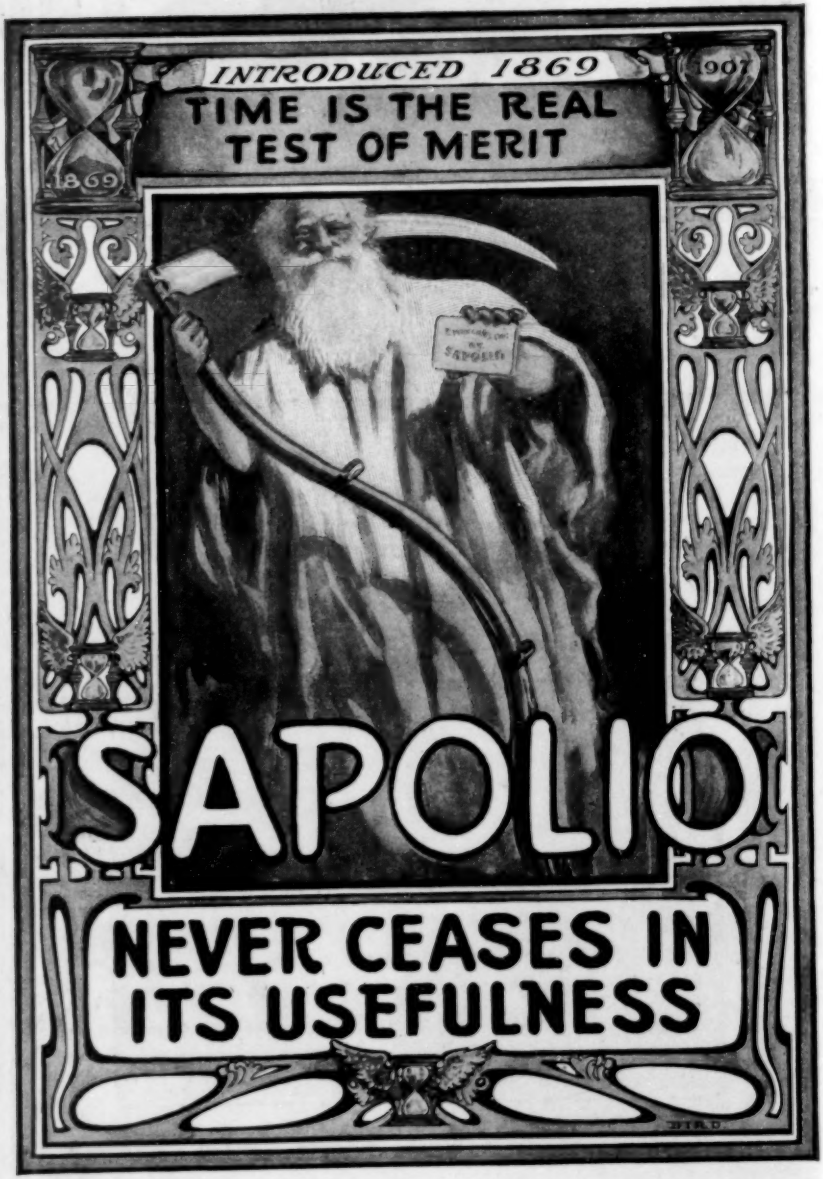
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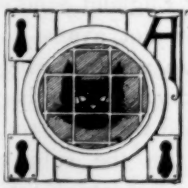
With What Measure.*

BY MAUDE HEATH



T eighteen Angelique Duvois had two great ambitions. One was to live in luxury without work, and the other to be respected and looked up to as a superior order of being. At thirty she had gratified both, according to her ideals, though at eighteen they would have seemed hopeless to a less determined character.

When these two dreams took possession of Angelique, she believed that money would accomplish them both. The question was, where to obtain the money? She had, she considered, made the most of very limited opportunities. Born in the county hospital at Tombstone, Arizona, nothing was known of her mother save that she was a young and pretty stranger, unable to speak a word of English or Spanish. A letter postmarked at New York and addressed to Miss Angelique Duvois was the only clue to the woman's identity, and as she died when her baby was three days old, no one was sufficiently interested to attempt to unravel it.

The mother's name was given to the tiny orphan by common consent of the doctor and the nurse, and she grew up through the happy, good-natured babyhood of a perfectly healthy animal, to

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the storm and stress of a childhood marked by many a conflict between the powers in authority and an individuality that showed no affinity with her name. In fact, the superintendent of the orphan asylum, where her life from three to ten years was spent, was willing to go on record as saying that if Angelique belonged to the family of angels at all, it must certainly be the branch that inhabit the realms of darkness, for a worse child never drew breath. But it was only those who knew her well who gave such testimony. Visitors to the home exhausted their vocabularies in admiration of the child, who looked like a tropic flower, with her delicate little body and dusky hair and eyes.

It was when the matron found her with her pet kitten hanging by its tail to the door knob, while Angelique stuck pins in it, that she declared her patience to be worn out, and vowed that the child should be "bound out," to work as much as she could be compelled to and go to school the rest of the time. So Angelique was handed over to the tender mercies of a New England school teacher who was in Arizona for her health and not averse to doing a little missionary work while the climate was restoring her. She said, when she heard Angelique's story and saw her appealing beauty, that what the poor child needed was love and confidence. She had many reasonable theories on the subject of child training which she had hitherto had no opportunity to fully demonstrate, and they were put in order for Angelique's benefit. When she had been for a week under the prescribed treatment of love and confidence, she ran away, accompanied by all the money and jewels that had been so conveniently placed within her reach. When she was overtaken and brought back, she gave as a reason for her departure her opinion that "Miss Pillsbury was an easy guy and didn't know nothing about kids," adding with contempt, "she never even hits me."

This good lady having declined any further responsibility in the matter, stating her belief that Angelique was a vessel appointed to destruction, the girl passed rapidly from one place of residence to another, being at times subjected to prayers and tears to "change her wicked heart," and at others to blows and semi-starvation for the same purpose, depending upon the nature and self-control possessed by her temporary guardians. Neither mode

of procedure had much effect, Angelique revenging herself as fully as possible upon those who were cruel to her, and deceiving those who were kind.

She attended school only so much as she was obliged to, which was not very much, and it was a mystery to every one who knew her how she managed to acquire such correctness of speech and manner as she displayed. As a matter of fact, her pride was Angelique's one vulnerable point. She was afraid of neither man, woman, nor devil, so far as she knew them. She evinced no affection for any person nor animal; but to be laughed at, or to realize that she had made a mistake in speaking, caused her acute misery. As she grew older, she observed every motion, inflection, and expression of every woman she saw that she considered a "grand lady," and practised them painstakingly in private until they became second nature to her.

At eighteen she was strikingly beautiful, tall, slender, and graceful as a reed, with quantities of shadowy dark hair, and eyes the color of topaz, fringed with long, thick black lashes, a clear, colorless skin, regular features, and perfect teeth. She possessed positive genius in contriving to dress tastefully with practically no outlay, making over garments given her by charitably inclined women into creations quite unlike their former semblance, or evolving from cheap fabrics gowns that in fit and *chic* were the despair of women with more money but no French blood.

At eighteen, after ten years of labor of various degrees of distastefulness, Angelique decided that she would work no more, and in pursuance of this idea unobtrusively departed without leaving an address, and took up her abode in Tucson. Being extremely pretty and unhampered by any moral sense to render her unhappy, she entered at once upon an existence of ease and comparative luxury with little delay. Until she was thirty, and more beautiful than when a young girl, Angelique led a life that seemed good to her, and about the financial details of which probably the less said the better.

Having gratified one ambition, the other cried more insistently for satisfaction, and her desire for respect and deference increased with each year that seemed to make it more impossible to achieve. An irreproachable manner, and the continued refusal to associate

with women who might otherwise have supposed themselves to be in her class, were, so far, the most she had been able to accomplish in the way of gratifying her dominant desire, but she never abandoned the idea of sometime being in reality what she had for so many years been in imagination.

Of all the men she had met in her career, only one had in any degree touched Angelique's heart. For Manuel Pedro, gambler, horse racer, general reprobate and suspected assassin, she had felt all the love of which her fiery soul was capable. It surprised at first and rather vexed her — it was so unusual and inconvenient to think of any one but herself; to find that all the money she could spend and all the beautiful gowns she could wear still left a hunger that she could neither define nor control. When he left her, after a brief companionship that lasted only while it seemed safe for him to remain in Arizona, and that ended without even a pretense of regret on his part, she suffered for the first time in her life a crushing, throbbing, craving for the voice and presence of another human being — the one man who had ever been necessary to her happiness. Mingled with grief at his loss was the humiliation and rage that at times overwhelmed her in remembering that her pride had deserted her to the extent of letting him see that she loved him, unasked and undesired. Her old fear of ridicule tortured her with the idea that Manuel would laugh about her with his companions, and tell the story of her appeal to take her with him in his retreat from personified law. As she brooded over her fancied wrongs and his mocking of her, the love she had for him gradually grew less, leaving in its place a burning hatred that glowed more fervently as the passion that gave it birth cooled.

When Angelique was thirty her second ambition was also accomplished. She was staying at one of the hotels alone, and as her stars ordained, met a man from the east, Richard Legro, who was in the clutch of consumption, and nearly at the end of his unequal warfare. They met, naturally enough. A scant knowledge of the world and the absence of friends to warn him, assisted Angelique in the furtherance of her purpose, and before a month had passed she was safely and securely Mrs. Richard Legro, holding for speedy use a will, properly drawn, and conveying to her sundry stocks, bonds, and moneys, when their present owner should

have abandoned them in his departure for a place to which "it is certain we can take nothing away."

She had not long to wait. If it could be accounted to her for righteousness that she made the last few weeks of one man's life happy, it was hers. Her husband's joy in her was clouded by no suspicion, no inkling of the truth, and the brief honeymoon, that was so quickly quenched in the sea of death, was undimmed by any doubt of the wife whom he adored.

Swathed in becoming widow's weeds, Angelique listened to the reading of the will that gave to her a great fortune, with everything to facilitate her speedy possession of it carefully attended to beforehand. As soon as possible she shook the dust of Arizona from her dainty shoes, her former associates knew her no more, and her destination, if intended for a secret, was most successfully kept.

Coincident with the disappearance of Angelique Duvois from Tucson was the advent of Mrs. Richard Legro, a young and lovely widow, in San José. With apparently unlimited means, she soon purchased a fine place about two miles from town, consisting of a palatial mansion and extensive grounds. It had at one time included a large vineyard, but that had been sold, and only a partially ruined and abandoned stone winery remained to remind the owner of the past industry. A tramp, drunken and disheartened, had crawled into the cellar one night to cut his throat, by way of escape from his troubles, and since that time the building had been accredited with ghastly sights and sounds, and shunned by all passers-by.

Generous and hospitable, Mrs. Legro found no difficulty in making a triumphant entry through the portals of San José society, and the doors, to glance through which she might have pleaded in vain a year before, opened widely and graciously to receive the owner of "Elmcrest." It might have created unholy mirth in Manuel Pedro and his friends to have seen Angelique on her knees beneath the rose-hued window of "All Saints," where she elected to worship, but the rector saw no incongruity in the devout attitude of his most liberal parishioner, for whom he experienced an uneasy commingling of respect for her wealth and orthodoxy, and priestly love for her beautiful dusky face, which he mistakenly called in his prayers, her soul.

So, all these preliminaries being satisfactorily arranged, Angelique was pleased with her earthly success and happy in its fruition. Contrary to all maiden lady lecturers, she was troubled by no longing to return to her former career of unconventionality. All her life she had bent every energy to attaining the eminence of respectability she now breathed in so naturally, and having reached her goal, she rested on her laurels, content and at peace with all her fellow-creatures. It was only at rare intervals that she even remembered Manuel. The mild passion of the rector, the Woman's Whist Club, of which she was president, the Driving and the Cross-country Clubs, and the various social dissipations, filled her life. She was handicapped by no sense of humor, and it seemed fitting and proper in her eyes that her air castles had formed for themselves a firm foundation, and that the station for which she believed herself to be intended should have materialized itself for her occupation. After two years of this pleasant existence, Angelique had practically forgotten the sordid life that had preceded it, and even to herself never neglected her rôle nor lowered her mask.

In blissful security, she dreamed of no change nor interruption in her life of agreeable routine. It was, therefore, a distinct shock when the maid ushered a stranger into the drawing-room, who proved to be none other than the once-loved Manuel Pedro. He was not the dashing Manuel of old days, but a very dingy-looking desperado, evidently far down on his luck and brazenly determined to mend his fortunes by her assistance. Deciding before she reached him that she must dissemble until she learned his intentions, Angelique took his awkwardly extended hand cordially and professed her great pleasure in seeing him. No one, she said to herself, hotly, should meddle with her laboriously reared structure of respectability, least of all this ingrate, to whom she owed nothing but hatred and contempt. But she talked graciously, careful not to make too apparent her lately acquired culture, and asking with well-feigned interest of the old associates and of his own adventures.

Somewhat thrown from his calculations by this unexpected welcome, Manuel approached his real errand with diffidence, but to his further surprise Angelique acceded to his hesitating request

for a "temporary loan" with cheerful promptitude. He confided to her that if he could raise five hundred dollars he could procure a shooting-gallery outfit, and with a little poker on the side thought he could pick up a decent living. She sympathized with his plans and professed herself more than willing to help him. The only difficulty in the way was that she had only some fifty dollars in the house at the time, and would need a week to get the required sum from the bank. If he would come back in a week or ten days, in the meantime getting along on the fifty, she would give him the larger sum "in memory of old times." To say that Manuel was delighted is not to do justice to his sentiments of gratitude to Angelique and felicitation on his own attractions, which it was easy to see still held their old charm. He pocketed the money, assured her of his undying regard for her, and took himself off, pledged to return in ten days.

A sleepless night, passed in formulating various schemes, which were found weak and rejected, finally resulted in a satisfactory one, and the next day, in response to a telephone call, a mason and several assistants journeyed to Elmcrest to build a steel and cement vault in one corner of the disused wine cellar. It was an expensive job and was done in the most approved style. Mrs. Legro explained that she had many valuable papers and jewels that she preferred to keep at home, rather than in the bank, and the vault was for that purpose. It was about ten feet square, when finished, was scientifically ventilated and provided with the newest and safest locks, guaranteed to withstand the most accomplished burglar. A small door, high up in the wall, provided additional light when opened, and would enable Madame to secure plenty of air when she chose to sit there to clip her coupons. There was no secret about the room, nor its avowed purpose. All the servants knew of it and watched its construction, but as they firmly believed the cellar to be haunted by the disfigured ghost of the tramp who deceased there, not one of them could have been induced to visit the spot without plenty of company.

When Angelique had paid the bill and mastered the intricacies of the locks, the secret of which no one but she and the locksmith knew, she congratulated herself on possessing a treasure room fully qualified to retain whatever she committed to its keeping.

Promptly at the time specified Manuel again appeared at Elmcrest. Again he was greeted with cordiality. The money was at hand this time and was counted over to him with polite disclaimer of any obligation involved. His plans were recounted and discussed, and finally, after an evening remarkably like old times, Angelique herself ushered him to the door, the servants, she explained, all having a holiday to attend a fiesta in town.

As he might not call again, Angelique suggested showing him the grounds. The white light of the full moon flooded the garden with its cold brilliancy. Beneath its rays the woman's face looked strangely pale and her dark eyes gleamed sombrely. Manuel recognized, with a reminiscent thrill, how beautiful she was, and half determined to try to revive the old love again. It would be worth his freedom — all this wealth as a premium with so handsome a wife. But there was time enough. He shrewdly remembered that moonlight often developed in his heart symptoms of the grand passion that the next day's prosaic sunshine dissipated.

They were approaching the old winery, black and prison-like in the shadow. A tiny shiver ran down Manuel's spine, but when Angelique shudderingly told him the story of the ghost, and declared that nothing would induce her to enter the place at night — "at least not alone," with an upward glance of appeal for his brave protection, he promptly laughed at such childish fears, and insisted upon exploring the building. Once inside, she suddenly remembered her new plaything, and offered to show him the fittings of the vault. Stooping to examine the cement floor, he did not hear her cat-like tread, and only the heavy clang of the massive door startled Manuel into turning to leave the place.

Dense blackness met his eyes. There was no trace of a door from the inside. Absolute stillness reigned for a few minutes and then a door, less than a foot wide and six or eight inches in depth, opened high up in the wall, and the delicate face of Angelique appeared at the aperture, illumined by a lantern she held. A mocking smile curved her mouth and she surveyed him in silence while he first demanded and then begged her to release him.

"It is my turn now, mon ami," she said, laughing a little. "You see I am kinder than you were. When I begged you to take me with you to Mexico you refused and made a jest of me."

Her eyes shone yellow in the light, like a cat's. "How badly I felt! My poor heart was quite broken. But I do not revenge myself. No. I love you far too much to part from you. I will keep you here with me. Every day, if I do not forget, you shall see me. Is that not happiness?" She laughed amusedly, as a cat might laugh at a struggling mouse, and before he could reply the door closed.

In the thick darkness of his cell Manuel listened for some sound to tell him that she had gone away. Nothing but a silence that could almost be felt rewarded him. He shouted, and when his fear had reached the point of terror, he screamed and flung himself futilely against the walls, but no one answered, not even the echo of his own voice, which was tossed back to him by the solid masonry.

Ages passed. It might have been years, so far as his own sense of time could tell him, when the little door again opened and Angelique's face appeared at the window. She threw in to him a loaf of bread and a leather flask of water attached to a cord.

"I forgot to say last night," she said, "that it will not make any difference how much noise you make, if it amuses you. I do not think that any one will hear you, but if they do it will insure your not being interrupted, as no one in the neighborhood will come near the cellar at any time if they can help it, and if they hear the ghost of the tramp it will go further to keep them away than if they only believe it has been seen. I will bring you food and drink, but do not wear yourself out planning ways of escape, for I assure you this retreat was built with special reference to keeping you safe."

"Why do you not kill me at once, if I am in your way?" he demanded. "No one will know, and I'd rather be dead than shut up here like a rat in a trap."

"That would be wicked," she replied, with a light laugh. "Besides, you might haunt me, like the tramp that I told you of. Oh, no! You will die when your time comes. I shall not hurry nor detain you. One would think you would be grateful to me for providing you with food and shelter for the rest of your life, with no effort on your part. And you have money, too — five hundred dollars. Doesn't it amuse you to count it, and think what you would buy if you were free again?"

Still laughing, she closed the door before he could answer her gibes. After that day he seldom saw his jailer. Scanty food and water were dropped through the door at intervals of seeming centuries. Only the streak of fatalism that had made him a gambler kept him from suicide. He could have taken his own life with his bare hands. At times he planned how it might be done, but always he felt that his luck would change — he could not forever play a losing hand — and when it did —

He kept his sanity by regular mental exercise, after he had proved the futility of hysterically flinging himself upon the stone floor and straining his throat with shrieks that were unheeded by God or man. He planned trips that he would make when he was free, starting from the San José station, and carefully recalling every depot and water tank on the road to Tucson. He built houses in his mind, preparing and placing every plank and joist and shingle. He bought the furniture for it, piece by piece, calculating the cost as he went. He reckoned the years of his life, mentally dividing them into months, weeks, days, hours, and minutes.

In all his fancies he learned after awhile to refrain from picturing the revenge he would take on Angelique. It required but a short time to show him that that way madness lay, and to keep himself strong in body and brain against the day of his release became his dominant thought. He saw with maddening clearness Angelique's scheme and her cleverly planned vengeance that prevented any danger to her new respectability, while it satiated her desire to repay his old slighting of her. He had fallen into her toils as easily as a fly into a spider's web. He raged inwardly as he remembered the fatuous self-conceit that prompted him to reopen the old wound to her vanity. From her he knew he had nothing to hope, but that something would happen to free him he fully believed. He dared not doubt it.

The time wore on. Matters at the mansion on the hill were outwardly much the same as before. The mistress entertained the "best people" as usual; she listened to the rector's mixture of love-making and theology with the same cool, tolerant smile, but her acquaintances said she was growing thin, and the servants grumbled among themselves that she was nervous, unreasonable,

and impossible to please. She no longer went to town to theatre parties nor club meetings. She appeared to dislike leaving the place for more than an hour, and when she returned from even these short absences she inquired of the servants if any one had called, or if anything unusual had happened, in a way that they considered veiled a suspicion of them in some ill-understood form.

At the expiration of a year Mrs. Legro had grown worn and faded. The rector's admiration was not so apparent, and her mirror pitilessly showed her faint lines that did not belong in so lovely a face, and gray threads that were dimming the glory of her dusky hair.

Every night she trod again the oft-traveled road of repentance, seeking vainly for some safe way to undo the wrong that she was forced to acknowledge to her insistent soul she had done. Fear, livid and grisly, accompanied her in every waking moment. She feared to speak to Manuel, feared to look upon him if he lived, and feared to learn the truth if he was dead. She dared not leave the place for long, and feared to return lest discovery had preceded her. She counted the minutes of the morning until the time to take his food to the cell, and made the short journey from the house in daily fear of being followed and detected. If she could, she would gladly have liberated him, but fear of death and its judgment added themselves to her other fears, and she lacked the courage to let him out to wreak his vengeance upon her.

The spring came tardily in the year of 1906. Manuel had been in his living grave just a year the 17th of April. That night Angelique sat alone under a magnolia tree near the cellar and listened, as she always did, involuntarily, for sounds from the gloomy building. Nothing disturbed the stillness of the warm night. The air was heavy and sultry, seemingly trying to atone for the lateness of the summer warmth by its intensity when it did appear. Not a breeze stirred the leaves of the trees, that hung limply from the boughs. A feeling of expectancy, as if waiting breathlessly for some horror creeping upon her, enveloped Angelique, and the scenes of her whole life seemed to pass in slow and stately procession before her vision. Like a nightmare, the sins and errors of thirty years marshaled themselves in solid ranks. Long-forgotten delinquencies revived themselves from the past

and joined the dissolving view. Nothing was omitted from her individual judgment day, and the ease with which she might have done right, the simplicity of truth and purity, demonstrated themselves, with the irrevocableness of the record. To escape the horrors of memory, she went to her room, undressed hurriedly and drank the sedative that, by judicious additions had come to be her sole refuge from the fears and fantasies that made her waking hours a torture.

In the narrow room that had become his tomb while he yet lived, Manuel paced back and forth the three steps each way that provided the exercise which he never omitted from his daily program. Dark and close, with little variation of temperature, he could still feel the intense, unusual heat. The same sense of brooding poise in the atmosphere, of waiting for some crouching horror, was apparent to him, as to Angelique.

He had spoken to no one save his own ears for nearly a year — a year in reality, but to him, shut up in unchanging dusk and silence, it had been a period of time impossible to compute. It was as if he had already entered the state where one day is as a thousand years. For a time he had waited anxiously through the interminable hours, until the little door opened, and begged, threatened, and implored Angelique in a vain effort to make her speak to him, but at last he had given it up. He counted the days, as indicated by her visits, for he reckoned that she came but once a day. For each time that the door opened he scratched a tiny mark on the cement wall. Every seventh day he made a longer stroke, and a dozen times a day he counted these recorded days.

He had no means of knowing if any one had heard his frenzied screams and oaths before he had learned to control his despair and fear — fear lest he should go mad, or that he should be forgotten and starve to death slowly and painfully, like an animal in a trap. He remembered a man brought in from the desert in Arizona, raving mad from thirst, his tongue black and swollen, and he almost feared to drink the water in his flask, lest he should get no more.

Hundreds of futile plans for escape he had made, attempted, and one by one counted them as failures. For a time settled lethargy had gripped him, but the night of the 17th of April his

old courage had revived. "Patience and shuffle the cards," had been his motto when playing a losing game. The phrase came back to him now in an almost audible voice, and he made no attempt to sleep. He was waiting for something, he knew not what, but it behooved him to be ready. When matters are at their worst any change is for the better. He walked three steps to the right, three to the left, three forward and three back, over and over, listening almost breathless in the sultry, sullen air for the Thing that was surely coming, eager to meet it, whatever it might be.

And it came. Came with a roar, angry and menacing, a shock and crash, as of falling worlds, — a sickening heaving of the earth beneath his feet, a sudden righting of itself and an instant's pause, followed by a heavier, more stupendous, reeling, staggering plunge of the earth. The walls rose, swayed, and fell outward. Manuel was hurled to the ground, but struggled to his feet, free in the cool, gray dawn. The cellar that had been his prison for a year lay in ruins. One wall only remained standing and swaying drunkenly. Down the path before him he saw the servants running, mad with fear. Farther down the hill, where the house had stood, was a pile of ruins, heaped in a curiously unnatural way, as if the walls had been lifted by some Titan and flung vengefully about.

It occurred to him for the first time that in or beneath that mass of debris, Angelique might be imprisoned. He started slowly and painfully down the path. Slight shocks of earthquake followed each other rapidly, but harmlessly. As he drew near the shattered building he heard a faint cry. A smile, the first he had worn for a year, twisted his mouth. My lady was alive then. It was well that she should be. A turn in the road brought her before him.

She sat almost erect, straining vainly at a heavy timber that pinioned her legs. Manuel stopped and watched, still smiling. With frantic intensity she struggled with the beam that held her. She could lift it a little, a very little, could hold it a moment while she tried to pull her limb away, then each time it fell back. Each time she could lift it a little less. It was like the efforts of a fly to pull itself from a sheet of sticky fly-paper. Alone, they two together, beneath the uncaring dawn, they played their small drama, the actor and the audience.

At last he laughed aloud, a weak, quavering, mirthless sound, and she turned her head to look. The possible shade more of deathlike pallor overspread her features. She held out her hands to him.

"O God! Manuel, help me." She began to cry hysterically. "Only a little. I will lift. You can get it off. It is crushing me."

He stood impassive, watching her curiously. She did not understand, or for the moment she had forgotten.

"Hurry!" she cried, in her old imperious manner. "I tell you it is hurting me!"

Then, as he still stood motionless, his meaning penetrated her mind. Looking about her, as an animal caught in a trap looks, she saw, at the farther end of the ruins, where the kitchen had been, a little puff of smoke. In a frenzy of terror she implored him.

"Oh, Manuel! For the love of God! Manuel, I am sorry. I would have let you out, truly I would, only I was afraid. Surely you will not let me burn to death!"

Her voice rose to a shriek, as a yellow tongue of flame licked up a pile of loose wooden fragments. She tugged, straining at the timber upon her. Her hands were torn and bleeding. She prayed to the unhearing saints, and all the while Manuel stood, emotionless, with the fixed smile on his face.

The flames crackled and began a tentative roar, as if to test their powers. The sun came up, calmly beginning his day's course, heedless of the misery of the ant-like creatures beneath him as he had been regardless of their mirth.

Exhausted and faint, Angelique stretched her hands weakly to the automaton-like figure before her and whispered: "Manuel, for the sake of the time when you said you loved me, for the sake of all I was to you once, in mercy kill me. You cannot leave me to burn."

He answered her with the same unearthly laugh, unmodulated, weak and quavering, and she saw that he was mad, as she fell back unconscious of swift-coming death.

Phyllis.*

BY FLORENCE GROVE.

HE July sun glared fiercely on two trunks, set side by side on the platform of the little station. One, a battered sole leather Man-of-the-World, covered with steamer labels and hotel placards, from Norway to Naples; the other new and fresh, evidently a débutante in its first season; each decorated with a white satin sash and a huge heart inscribed:

The Ticket Agent and the Baggage Master sauntered up the platform.

"Dern fools!" said the Ticket Agent tersely.

"Where did these here come from?"

"The Gables, for the 2.10," answered the Baggage Master.

"Sorter queer — this here new one's checked for Magnolia, and t'other one for Bar Harbor. If they're just united for life, what in thunder do they want to *un*tie theirselves for in Boston?"

"Dern fools!" again observed the misanthropic Ticket Agent. "Guess there's been another of them quiet weddin's, with 500 swell guests, like 'Taown 'n' Country's,' always talking abaout. Sickenin' objects these trunks are. Throw a tarpaulin over 'em, and cover 'em up from decent eyes till the 2.10 runs in."

A dog-cart swinging down the road stopped further surmises

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from the officials. With a swish of duck skirts, Mrs. Jack Cullen jumped to the ground, giving the reins to a smart groom, while she awaited the descent of a tall, slight girl. Then they paced the platform, the young matron giving her last instructions.

"Now, dear, you'll be all right. It's a bore having to change at the Junction, but Bob Felton will put you on the other train. Remember, your aunt *must* let you come back in September. Now that it's over, your first visit hasn't been so bad, has it? I'm sure you're not so shy as when you first came."

An indistinct murmur was the answer, out of which Mrs. Cullen caught a tone of protest.

"Nonsense! it's no trouble for him to put you on the right train, and he won't bother you with talking, for he doesn't notice children, you know," with a caressing pat on the shoulder.

Here the rumble of the approaching 2.10, and the arrival of the rest of the Gables house party in the wagonette, silenced her. With a shy little smile, the tall girl turned to make her good byes to the group; she shook hands dutifully with each, leaving Mrs. Jack for the last, who received a warm kiss, and hearty "Thank you *so* much."

A tall, distinguished looking man of thirty left the group and helped the girl on the train, mounting after her.

Voices called, "Miss Livingstone, Miss Livingstone!" They both turned; then flying, stinging rice fell about them. The air was full of it. Grinning evilly, five stalwart men shouted the Wedding March; an old shoe took the man in the chest, a white slipper struck the girl on the arm, and the 2.10, collecting itself with a groan, shot down the grade.

"What in—" Felton began. Then the deviltry of the scheme flashed over him and left him speechless.

They entered the car, greeted with broad smiles, and the girl sank into a vacant chair in an agony of blushes. The windows were open, the car was scattered with rice, and the serenade had not been lost on the passengers.

Felton dropped into the seat beside her.

"Miss Livingstone," he began, gravely, "Those men do not deserve to have me apologize for them, but I cannot say how I regret that you should have had this annoyance."

A porter stood at his elbow, presenting an enormous bouquet of Bride roses, tied with long white streamers.

This was the climax. Out of the open window were hurled the offending flowers, and back to the smoker fled poor Felton.

A quick glance showed Miss Livingstone dissolved in tears.

Safe in that haven of refuge, Felton gritted his teeth savagely for a few minutes with strenuous words. "I supposed Harry Cullen hatched this infernal job last night, after Mrs. Jack told me to look out for 'Miss Eyes' today. *She'll* be in a fine rage, after inviting the girl there to be cured of her shyness! What *am* I to do with her! I'll have another cigar, then I'll have to go back, I suppose."

. . . . . .

Phyllis would gladly have followed the flowers out of the window — after this open disgrace, Death would be a trifle. Of course dear Mrs. Jack was not to blame; it must have been that odious Harry Cullen, who always led the mischief. She remembered hearing shouts and yells from the billiard room last night; they must have been plotting it then. Oh, how *could* they be so cruel!

And Miss Livingstone presented a most bride-like appearance as she wept into her handkerchief.

. . . . . .

The cigar finished, Felton pulled himself together. A thorough man's man, and admirer of young married women, he shuddered at the thought of the weeping girl in the Pullman.

"Wonder if she's at it still," he thought, as he left the smoker. "Her eyes were big enough before without flooding 'em with tears?"

She *was!*

But, as he walked down the aisle, Felton noticed the hasty dab at her eyes, the disappearance of her handkerchief into a small wad in one hand, the tremulous but resolute smile of greeting; and he saw that, instead of consolation, he must make light of the contretemps.

"Very plain," Bob thought, as he seated himself beside her.

"Harry Cullen never remembers that he has left Harvard," he began. "You have no idea of the scrapes he got us into at college; he was the youngest of our crowd, but far the worst." And, for the next hour, he told her tales of college pranks, and of his

last summer's cruise in Norway, with the same crowd, there being no ladies on the yacht to restrain Harry's frolics.

Gradually he watched the traces of tears vanish, the sensitive mouth relax more frequently into smiles; and the soft blush which came and went so prettily, made him decide, as they neared the Junction, "By Jove, she's *lovely!*"

A bright, smiling girl and a relieved young man descended at the Junction. So quickly was Miss Livingstone whisked from one train to the other that she did not see her trunk in bridal attire, changing cars with her, but it did not escape the pained eye of Mr. Felton. Nor did Miss Livingstone observe the irate young man who grimly superintended the stripping of the same trunk a few minutes later.

"Don't I recognize Harry's master mind in that! *I* never would have thought of the trunks!" Felton confessed, as he re-entered the car.

As he took a seat by Phyllis, a conductor came through the car, an open telegram in his hand. He read it aloud, a ripple of laughter behind him. Nearing Felton's seat he repeated the message.

"Telegram of which address is illegible, signed Harry: 'Father furious, mother distracted, return tonight and all will be forgiven.'"

Bob Felton involuntarily rose to his feet, on which the man advanced, offering him the bit of paper.

"It's not for me," said Felton, "I know nothing about it," adding inconsequently, "But I'll throw you off the train if you read it again."

When he returned from a brief interview with the conductor on the platform, he found Miss Livingstone calm.

"Plucky little thing!' he muttered admiringly to himself.

As he sat down, she smiled at him, saying with the little stammer which he was beginning to find so attractive:

"I'm n-n-ot going to let those h-h-horrid people upset me any more. But I do p-p-pant for revenge!"

"As pants the hart," hummed the amused Bob. "Don't pant any more, Miss Livingstone. I don't know what it will be, but those fellows will wish to a man that they hadn't thought of this joke. It hasn't been so bad, though," he added.

"No, indeed," assented Phyllis. "B-but imagine if any one we knew h-had been on the t-t-rain."

"Explanations *would* have been a bit awkward," said Bob. "Fancy me saying, 'This young lady, in spite of incriminating evidence, is *not* my bride. Nor have I torn her from the arms of her distracted parents.' Do you know, you looked at me murderously when I came back after leaving you in tears!"

"Ap-p-pearances were not deceitful *that* t-t-time," answered Phyllis. "I hoped n-never to see you again!"

"Dear me! I hope you've got over it now!" he asked anxiously. "I'd like awfully to run down to Magnolia and see you, if you would allow me."

"I'm sure my aunt will be very glad to see you — perhaps you know her, Mrs. Chatsworth Rogers. But if you *do* c-come, promise not to tell my uncle about this horrid j-joke. He is a most awful t-t-tease!"

"We will keep it dark, then," promised Felton. "Besides, silence will be the best punishment we can give them. They will long to know how we have taken it. Miss Livingstone, it's been quite the jolliest wedding journey I ever took."

"Have you had much experience?" Phyllis asked very demurely.

"Now, Miss Livingstone! Is that kind? Your idle question may probe the lacerated heart of a thrice bereft widower!"

"You don't look like t-triple extract of grief," laughed Phyllis as the train rolled into the station at Boston.

One of their fellow-passengers, who never doubted that he was watching an elopement, murmured as he left the train behind the unconscious pair:

"Girl's mighty sweet and pretty; but the man looks above that sort of underhand trick. I wouldn't have missed her face when the telegram was read for a good deal."

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August's brooding calm was in the air. A little, lazy breeze, perfumed with the clean, pungent fragrance of bay, wandered toward the veranda of a cottage perched on the rocks.

But the odor of sweet bay did not get that far, for claret-cup and fruit-punch scented the air on the veranda. A dozen people

were idling there, and a tall girl with big gray eyes was ladling into the glasses.

A blonde little lady, followed by a man, came up the steps, calling out, "Mrs. Rogers, I've brought Mr. Ames. We both need refreshment physically, and Mr. Ames craves an intellectual tonic. He could not find any at *our* house."

The little lady sank into a big wicker chair, waited upon instantly by two young men, while Mrs. Rogers led Ames across the veranda.

"There's no intellect in the house," Mrs. Rogers answered, "it doesn't keep well in hot weather, you know. But my niece will give you something better. Phyllis dear, I want to present Mr. Ames."

"Humph" thought Ames, "it is evident that all has been forgiven."

Aloud — "I have had the pleasure of at least seeing your niece before — I hope I may meet your husband too," turning to the girl with a retrospective smile.

Phyllis flushed crimson as she stammered painfully, "B-b-but I haven't any!"

"What a funny mistake," laughed Mrs. Rogers. "You must not put such ideas into my little girl's head, Mr. Ames."

"Ah, I see now," said Ames, "a case of mistaken identity; I fancied I had seen your niece before; a chance resemblance, don't you know," and he deftly turned the conversation.

But his speculating glance rested on the girl. Her stammer increased, her blush grew deeper.

"She was up to *something* that day in the train," mused Ames. "Perhaps after all, she hasn't been forgiven. Jove, that telegram was a good one!"

The same evening Ames propelled his host toward the lawn. A yellow August moon rose from the sea, as they paced up and down; scents of mingled pines and nasturtiums filled the air; those nasturtiums which are more vivid on Magnolia rocks than anywhere else.

"Put my foot in it this afternoon, old man," began Ames, puffing his cigar. "Who is that girl — Mrs. Rogers' niece?"

"Phyllis Livingstone?" asked Harrington. "She's just a quiet

little niece. Pour tea, looks scared if a man speaks to her, blushes and stammers. That's all."

"My dear fellow, that *isn't* all. I saw that girl on a Boston train, eloping with a tall, dark chap, a man of thirty, or so. Conductor came along reading telegram: 'Mother weeping, Father distracted, forgiven if you return.' Telegram was for them, because the man retired to the platform with the conductor, and the girl looked much upset."

"Absurd! Phyllis Livingstone certainly was not that girl."

"Harrington, I swear she *is* the same girl. I sat opposite her for two hours, and they amused me very much. You ought to have seen her face when I said I'd like to meet her husband!"

"Good Lord!" ejaculated Harrington, "what did she do?"

"Turned purple and looked scared. Then Mrs. Rogers saved the situation by saying it was an odd mistake of mine."

"It *is* that!" said Harrington, with conviction.

"Then I talked to her for awhile," pursued Ames. "I found she has been here for three weeks; it was about that time when I saw her on the train. I remember it was July 20th, because—"

"It's utter rot," said Harrington, rising, "Perhaps you might tell my wife, though."

. . . . . .

Magnolia's church was full. The movement of fans stirred delicate laces; perfumes of violet and orris floated over the congregation. The clergyman turned and looked at his flock in silence before pronouncing the text, wondering if there were one heart in which his words would find a resting place.

"Charity suffereth long, and is kind . . . is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil. Rejoiceth not in iniquity."

Slowly and quietly the words fell from his lips. That there were many to whom they should strike home, he knew. But those who listened did not know his feeling of hopelessness, did not have in their memories the pained eyes of a girl, hurt and uncomprehending, which had been haunting him during the last days. For he had heard the whispers; had seen the shrugs, had watched the amused looks on the men's faces, and he knew what it all meant. "Rejoiceth *not* in iniquity." Had they not been doing just that in the past week?

Phyllis had not gone to church that day. She was aware of a subtle change in her aunt's circle, a difference in atmosphere, but she was too innocent to search the meaning of it.

Not so Mrs. Chatsworth Rogers.

That capable lady issued forth that Sunday morning, bent on war. Yet it was with a bland smile that she greeted Mrs. Harrington, and saying that she was very much bored at home, begged for a bite of luncheon.

She took the reins of conversation into her own hands, guiding whither she would. It was only in her own boudoir that Mrs. Harrington finally discovered the true inwardness of the visit, when she found herself arraigned before a bar which would accept no sophistries.

Bit by bit, Mrs. Rogers came to the meaning of it all. The snowball of gossip, gathering around Ames' conviction that Phyllis and his runaway bride were one and the same, had grown to huge proportions.

Between anger, disgust, and hysterical laughter, Mrs. Rogers disentangled the web woven around poor Phyllis.

"Preposterous!" she finally gasped. "The idea of hinting such a thing about that child! I don't care what Mr. Ames thought he saw, he didn't see Phyllis. Now, Mrs. Harrington, you will have to come with me and hear her explanation. I don't care how hot it is, you must come," in answer to her protest, "Come along."

Telegrams to Felton and Harry Cullen were so strenuous, that a few hours later saw a grave and serious group of men in conclave assembled. It was a bad quarter of an hour for Harry, who felt that he and Mirth had parted company forever, and the repentant Ames vowed to trust no more to his own eyes. The proof was complete, even an "embarras de richesse" of evidence. Felton's rôle was that of stern, cold dignity, but Ames and Cullen ate the bread of Sorrow, watered by the tears of Affliction.

Phyllis did not leave her room all day, and it is not revealed what happened in that seclusion. But the Wheel of Life, swiftly turning, was bringing a dénouement which would never have come to pass had it not been for that eventful journey.

. . . . . .

Phyllis sat under a pine tree and looked across the narrow stretch of blue sea to Norman's Woe. The warm September day had a fresh tang of coming autumn in the air, a subtle awakening to life after summer languor.

A subtle awakening, too, had come over the girl's face in the last weeks. The big, innocent gray eyes were aroused, the expression more assured; the childish shyness was still there, but in time Phyllis may become a very charming woman, yes, even a woman of the world. Not without results have been the stirring episodes of the summer.

A man's footsteps sounded over the carpet of spicy pine needles and Felton sat down on the rock by her side. A deeper pink came into her cheeks, but she gave no word of greeting.

"Phyllis, I have come for my answer," said he quietly.

Still silence, and the gray eyes fastened on the rock.

"Phyllis, you're not half so shy as you were when I came two weeks ago, but you can't be described as loquacious even now. If you don't want to say anything, just look up once — I think I can tell what I want by your eyes — and — I don't believe, Phyllis — I don't believe, dear, that it will be *no*," and he gently raised her hand to his lips.

"Phyllis," he went on, "is it yes, sweetheart?"

Then his arm was around her, and her face was hidden on the shoulder of a Harris tweed coat.

"Yes," stammered Phyllis. "B-b-because you've given me such a t-t-taste for wedding journeys. Awfully bad habit to acquire!"

Mignon.*

BY ANNE STORY ALLEN.

I CALL this my dream story, and yet it was not a dream. The roar of an elevated train came through my open window, followed by the rush of an electric car. The room itself was very quiet. My little dog slept on the couch, and the canary in his cage trilled sleepily now and again. The seminary clock, two blocks away, struck midnight, and I closed the book I had been reading.

"Write," said a voice distinctly, though thinly, and as I wondered: "Write," it said again.

There was no shape near; no hallucination; no spectre, mental or material, to lay claim to the authoritative command. But, "write," said the voice for the third time, and so I wrote.

"For a long time I have awaited this opportunity. Your positive nature rarely swings to the negative pole as completely as tonight, and I, who have listened long and wearily, for an answering vibration, know that the hour has come when I can leave with you the message you are to pass on. 'To whom?' I feel you asking. To no one you will ever know, but send it out into the world, and it may be that, the message given, my spirit shall pass beyond to further growth or to that rest my dissolution failed to bring me. Ask nothing; doubt nothing; believe nothing, only *write*.

"As a child I was painfully sympathetic, yet easily aroused to violent anger. I carried in my heart an inborn recognition of injustice, and I hungered for affection as only the unattractive can hunger. Cowed and rebellious, attracted and repelled, I lived in a very hell of emotions, not the less black and hopeless that it was unguessed by those about me. My heart responded quickly to tenderness, yet I could not arouse it in others.

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"Though, for trivial causes, anger took complete possession of me, no one tried to show me its unreasoning folly. My father laughed, and my mother frowned or wept at my rages. My father ignored my crude attempts to claim his affection, and my mother repulsed my awkward caresses. These two were all in all to each other. I had been, and always would be, unwelcome.

"When I grew older there were those who told me that at the time of my birth my parents had been unable to make my advent a legal proceeding; apparently they had been unable to bestow upon me even a belated affection.

"I look back upon that small self, as no doubt they looked upon me, as the personification of intrusion, an Intrusion that all too quickly outgrew the confines of the nursery, and became an omnipresent Intrusion likely to appear before them at unexpected moments; liable to outbursts of temper, amusing, irritating, frightful as it might be — but always inopportune; an Intrusion, that had imperatively, if unconsciously, demanded certain legal steps; certain formal ceremonies. They had been roughly shaken from the heaven of romance where they were happy, to the earth of reality where their right to that happiness was impartially questioned, and the cause, ignorant and innocent, was by turn hated and ignored.

"Having legalized my birth, they turned from me and toward each other again. It was one of those strange loves that lasts through sin and shame and life and death. The union of two souls for good or ill.

"Through different sources I received their story, garbled, distorted, gilded, excused and condemned. Here and there a bit, here and there a hint; but always and through it all a horrible thread of truth that bound them together and left me alone.

"At twelve years I had known hate, despair and loneliness. Each tendril of love as it grew into being, became parched, withered from lack of nourishment, and my soul grew into a malformed, twisted thing, full of some sort of violent emotion that issued forth as rage or disproportioned adoration.

"My dog, the recipient of this unhappy commingling, failed, one day, to respond to my whistle. I was on the veranda steps. I whistled again. A laugh from my father at the creature's dis-

obedience, the soft, rippling echo of my mother's voice, stung me to fury. I brought the strap I held across the dog's face. There was a yelp of pain; a low curse of disgust from my father, an exclamation of horror from my mother.

"In this invisible world from which I speak to you the picture is sketched clearly. I see it now. The dog, shaking her head in agony; my father leaning forward to hide the sight from my mother; her pretty white hands covering her ears; my father's stern face and pointing finger, and myself with the cowering animal, slinking across the lawn toward the stables.

"They could not see me, as I turned the corner, throw myself on my knees and pound the grass with my fists. They did not know that, the storm having passed, I fainted at the sight of what my blow had done; that my kisses and tears mingled on the scarred and bleeding face of my pet.

"A young boy, with an old, set face, a blind dog in his arms! I see them often. Down by the willow tree where the river runs between narrow banks on the limits of a beautiful estate. The boy looked up one day — his eyes were often bent on that deep, quiet river — and saw coming toward him an angel, a slender, fairy shape. The dog within his arms pricked up her ears and uttered a short bark of welcome. The small angel laughed gleefully and ran straight to where the boy sat. There were cries in the distance, and the boy could make out a tall, grown-up figure. But the yellow halo came nearer each moment, and the boy rose instinctively, catching the girl close to him as she stumbled. Close to his dark, shut-in heart he clasped a ray of sunshine, and it warmed him, thrilled him, as he had never before in all his fifteen years been warmed or thrilled.

"Then the girl-child raised wide, sightless eyes to his, and asked, 'Who are you?' And as he saw that the eyes were sightless, he also saw that they were of heaven's own blue, so that the beauty of it seemed to blot out the pity of it till — but that was later.

"'Mignon,' I said one day — she was holding the blind dog tight to her side — 'what do you want most of all?'

"'To see, Thorold,' she replied, and I had known beforehand what the answer would be.

"She lowered her eyes from the sky beyond where she seemed always to be looking; I raised mine from the dark, silent river, and we turned our faces toward each other; fierce, black, piercing eyes gazing into soft, blue, unseeing ones.

"'You shall see,' I said quietly, 'I will make you see.'

"She caught her breath. 'No one,' she said, 'can make me see. I am blind.'

"'You *shall* see,' I repeated, holding her hand tight. 'I will make you see,' and a flush crept into her cheek, though she shook her head with a pitying smile — for both of us.

"After that there was something to live for. My tutors no longer found me idle, uninterested. To study, to learn, to grow, to get into manhood, out into the big world; out where I could become one with those judges who had pronounced sentence of doom on Mignon's sweet eyes; one of the judges, but far beyond them all, one who could revoke their sentence, and open the doors of darkness to the prisoner I loved.

"'He may as well be an oculist as anything.' It was my father's voice. And the soft laugh that followed was my mother's.

"'But why an oculist? And won't it cost you a lot of money?'

"'There is money enough, darling, and it will take his glum countenance away from us.'

"And so I was permitted to leave my home; to give up tutors and the solitary course of study laid out for me. I went out into the world of men, as well equipped for meeting and mingling with my fellows as a child in arms. Money I had to open the way before me, a few letters to friends, neglected and half-forgotten by my father, and next my heart the portrait of a sweet face with a halo of yellow hair and wide, sightless blue eyes.

"If, in the first years that followed, my loneliness was almost greater than I could bear, it was not when I was alone, it was when I was in the midst of fellow students; happy, careless mortals, who looked askance at me, but tried in friendly fashion to ignore the awful, subtle difference between me and them. In my own rooms, there was always the picture of *her;* there was still the blind dog, feeble and dependent on her master. We talked about *her*, the dog and I, and the sound of her bonny voice echoed in my ears a soft good-night.

"On each home holiday, I found her by the river, waiting. And each time I said, 'You shall see, I will make you.' Each time she smiled with less disbelief. My faith was kindling hers.

"And then my mother died. My father closed the place and went abroad. Before he went, I begged him as I never had asked for anything before, to let my rooms stay open, that I might spend my leisure time on the old place.

"He looked at me curiously.

"'I should not have fancied,' he remarked, 'that you had been so happy here as all that.'

"'It is home,' I faltered.

"'Home,' he replied, 'is where those you love may be.' He got up from his chair and walked to the window. 'I have no home,' then turning toward me: 'I should not fancy you had either,' he said thoughtfully, and I heard him mutter, 'poor boy!' as if his loneliness had suddenly revealed to him the possibility of mine.

"'Stay here if you like,' he said, kindly. Suddenly: 'The place is yours, Thorold, I shall never come here again. She is gone, and she *was* the place to me. I will arrange with the lawyers. Don't thank me. There is nothing to thank me for.' And indeed there was not.

"We left the same day, he for Europe, I for my class rooms, and when I went down to The Woods again, it was my own. I wove wild fancies there. Imagination and I ran over the whole beautiful place. I selected *her* rooms, I sat in *her* chairs. I picked *her* flowers in the fragrant rose houses. It was mine, but not mine. It was waiting for *her*.

"I did not see her that time, for she was abroad, but when I went back to town I worked with an inspiration that conquered physical fatigue and mental weariness, and so I came to the end of the long path that marked my progress toward discovery. White-haired physicians shook their heads; 'You are mad,' they would say, on listening to some of my theories.

"Then came the day that I was allowed to operate. A blind boy lay before me, unconscious from the ether, helpless, given over to my knife. For one brief second my strength failed, a horrible nausea almost overpowered me. Then before me I saw

two flecks of heaven's blue, and my own voice whispered in my ear, 'You shall see. I will make you.'

"The rush of courage, faith and knowledge that answered to that prompting carried me through.

"It was over. The physicians and specialists, no longer skeptical, but full of generous enthusiasm, crowded about me.

"'Wonderful!' they said. But I knew it was not wonderful for it had to be. Mignon must see, and I was the one to make her.

"I went to The Woods the next day for a rest. I must be perfectly well, strong and cool for my next case.

"Mignon was by the river.

"'They have read it to me,' she said, breathlessly. 'Is it true, Thorold?'

"And I said, 'It is true, dear.'

"Then she asked in a whisper, 'Will it be true for me?'

"And I answered, 'It will be true for you, sweetheart.'

"Two big tears stood in her eyes. 'Thank God!' she breathed.

"And I echoed, 'Thank God!'

"If I could have waited, but no! 'And then—' I cried 'Then, Mignon?' Selfishly, passionately, I flooded her with my love. I poured into her ears the story of my starved, dwarfed life. I told her she had been my inspiration, my star of light. I pressed upon her sensitive, shrinking soul the knowledge of my dependence upon her, and then I awaited her response.

"She was silent, and her mouth quivered for an instant, but her eyes looked straight into mine. I felt that though she could not see me, her soul beheld mine, dwarfed, pleading, starving for her love.

"'I will be yours,' she said; and the tenderness of her voice covered and hid any hint of renunciation, while the joy that overwhelmed me shut out any questioning as to the form of her assertion.

"That I, who had never been loved, should now receive full measure, pressed down and running over, seemed such a miracle to me, that I did not ask what the measure contained.

"When I kissed her, as she left me, her lips were cold. The physician recognized what the lover should have taken as warning. I wrapped her in the fleecy scarf she carried, and left her

at her garden gate, with instructions as to some tonic to bring the color back to her cheeks and lips.

"'I will be yours,' and I did not ask her if she could say, 'I love you.'

"The day was set for the operation. This time I had the hearty support and assistance of those who before had been doubtful. The case had awakened widespread interest, for in some way it had become noised abroad, but I would have present only those whose sympathetic intelligence would be of benefit.

"Two days before, I went down to my country home. I found her pale and quiet. Almost too unafraid, with the natural excitement wholly lacking.

"'What is it, Mignon?' I asked her. 'We will postpone it, if you are not ready.'

"'I am ready,' she replied, with a little smile, 'Quite ready,' and she sighed. And the sigh brought to me the first doubt that found a place in my full heart.

"I said nothing, but looked at her intently. She seemed to feel something in my manner, for she said, 'Are you not ready, Thorold?'

"I answered, 'I am ready, dear,' and then, with a strange foreboding: 'I must be ready — for anything.'

"She was listening, but not to me. An unconscious smile broke over her face, in response to something my less keen ears had not detected.

"'Is that you, Stephen?' she called, and from a side path — we were in her garden — stepped a young man, fair, tall, and good to look at.

"'I am here, Mignon,' he said, 'but I was not going to disturb you.'

"She laughed.

"'Silly boy!' she said; 'I knew you were going toward the house, and so I called you. This is Thorold, Stephen. He is going to make me see.' She spoke the last words as if to herself as well as her cousin. For it was her cousin. I had recognized him from her description; the young cousin who had lived abroad for many years, and who had been Mignon's companion in the many visits she had made her aunt in Vienna.

"Stephen held out his hand to me.

"'I am glad,' he said simply, 'It is wonderful. To think she will see!' He turned toward Mignon from me. 'God!' he muttered, under his breath. 'She will see!' His face turned white. He seized my hand again. 'God bless you — and her,' he said, 'I hope you will be — happy — both of you.'

"'Stephen,' cried Mignon, sharply, 'don't go.'

"He had turned away, and I marvelled to think she could perceive it.

"'I've got to catch the train, cousin. I'm going up tonight, you know. Good bye, Mignon. Courage, little girl!' He pressed her hand, and was gone.

"Mignon stood still. Her face was quite white, and her little hands were stretched with pathetic unconsciousness toward where her cousin had stood.

"'Shall I call him back?' It was my own voice, rough and hoarse. Mignon turned quickly.

"'No, dear,' she said, 'I didn't know he was going, that was all. I don't want him.'

"And if ever a lie was uttered, Mignon's sweet voice spoke one then.

"She talked on quickly, and I responded. A myriad of evil phantoms seemed to leer and point at me. Hate, jealousy, despair and fierce denial, all took weird shapes and waited to seize upon me. I kept them at bay till Mignon left me, and then I ran to the river bank, and threw myself beneath the tree where I had first taken the bit of sunshine to my heart.

"There the fiends fell upon me and strove to tear the warm radiance from me. I resisted, fought and struggled until wearied, faint and sick. Then truth came, and with kindly hand waved back the horrid phantoms, and quietly and gently removed the borrowed ray of sunshine from my heart and left it cold and desolate.

"When life has quite burnt out, and only that strange thing we call vitality remains, the body moves, the brain records sensation and the mind responds to certain promptings that habit has made second nature. So I worked that day, when, white and still before me, Mignon's face lay in the dignity of unconscious-

ness, and no one would have guessed that mind and brain and body were answering the calls that Love made imperative. Swiftly, surely, I moved; my touch was never more true, and I never feared failure less. It could not be, and it was not.

"The papers chronicled my success — and side by side with words of praise and approbation were head lines telling of my disappearance. I and my little blind dog had been seen to leave my rooms late at night. We had never returned.

"I had intended to write her, intended to tell her that she was released from her promise to me; that I left her free, for my profession claimed me. But before I could write the lie, Death claimed me, and my love for her followed and holds me here in this inner world, where all that is strongest in our nature helps or hinders as its quality is good or bad. My love for her was selfish, and as selfishness, it hinders. My love for her was true, and as truth it has upheld and strengthened me. To send this message to her; that my love for her is purged of all earthly taint; that my will toward her is happiness in the earthly life that she has still to live, has been the longing and desire that has held me on this plane of intermediate advancement. Now I may journey on to that other heaven where they who have made all possible atonement may rest and gain in knowledge of the Divine will.

"My love for her was life to me, in that it made it possible for me to leave behind that knowledge, that discovery that will help to bring good to my fellowmen. My love for her meant life to me in that it roused my better qualities and put to death the hate and torment and despair that held me bound.

"Lest it should seem too small a thing to keep me here, this desire of mine to make her happy, I wish it known that through the soul vision that we who have passed beyond are given, I see in her dear heart a great disquietude lest she should have betrayed to me her unspoken love for Stephen. I see her doubt and distress lest the accident that overtook me was my own seeking; I see her misery that she will never know if it is well with me.

"And seeing that, I could not go beyond. I must clear her dear heart of any doubt or fear. She must be happy in her love, else I myself cannot be happy, even here, where 'they that love

are blest.' Now, you have written it, and she will see. She will know that Death seized me, and not I, Death. She will know that I have gone beyond, where all is peace and sweetest knowledge.

"My thanks, dear Scribe; 'twas weary waiting, but it has a glad reward. Good bye, my Mignon, all that is best in my love for you I carry with me. The rest I have atoned for."

. . . . . .

It was not a dream, for I heard the roar of an elevated train, and the clatter of milk wagons was familiarly distinct. My little dog whined in her sleep, and the canary trilled a hoarse, sleepy note. If there was other presence of any kind about me, I did not know it.

The voice ceased. Somewhere, somehow, someone must know whether I be author or amanuensis.

The Rexforth Circulating Library.*

BY DON MARK LEMON.

HE handed the beggar a half-dollar, for the pathetic old fellow had made a moving appeal, and was about to return to his pocket the other coins in his hand, when one of them slipped through his fingers and started to roll down the sidewalk.

He saw that it was his pocket-piece, a Louis d'or with the image of the Grande Monarque, and made a hasty dash for the coin. It escaped him and shot away at accelerating speed down the sidewalk and just inside the flagstone. He lengthened his stride and made another dash for the coin. Some small silver spilled from his hand, but he let it go and followed the elusive Louis XIV. Suddenly the gold-piece struck a ridge in its downward path and shot around the corner of a public courtway. Baxter followed.

He heard a laugh at his amusing predicament, but did not look up, as his blood was aroused, and he was bound that the coin should not escape down some hole or cranny.

At about three-fourths its length, the courtway lifted a bit, retarding the speed of the coin, which finally swerved in its track and rocked along the flagstone, to reel at last like a very drunken Louis into a doorway, where it lay in the corner, half-propped against the footboard.

Baxter stooped and picked up the coin, and as he arose to a standing posture, a small, neat brass sign met his eye. It was set into the door before which the coin had come to a standstill, and it read:

THE REXFORTH CIRCULATING LIBRARY.

The courtway or narrow street down which the golden Louis had led him was wholly new to Baxter, and as he looked about he

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saw a couple of ladies across the way smiling at his late predicament.

He would step into Rexforth's and recover his serenity. He opened the door and found himself in a large, well-lighted room, fitted up more like a ladies' parlor than a library. Where were the books? He could not see any, and the patrons — all ladies, it would seem — that came and went while he gazed around nonplussed did not bring nor take away any object that could have been mistaken for a book.

"This is something new," commented Baxter, mentally, "Must be a bookless library."

Fancies of a new idea in libraries floated through his brain. Perhaps the books at Rexforth's were not printed volumes, but phonographic records, and all the patron needed to do was to draw a wax cylinder of the latest popular novel — the record made by the author himself — take it home and place it on a phonograph, and science, the mother of convenience, would do the rest.

But all this was hypothetical, so he looked about. On the wall near him was a neat typewritten list, headed: "The Six Books Most in Demand by the Patrons of the Rexforth Circulating Library, for the Month of September." His eye ran down the list.

"Third-rail alive!" he murmured, "what kind of ladies patronize this library?"

For the list read:

Izaak Walton's Compleat Angler.
Shakespeare's King Henry The Fifth.
Last of the Mohicans.
Meditations of Aurelius.
Samuel Johnson's Dictionary.
Huckleberry Finn.

He shut his eyes and tried to puzzle it out, but the more he thought the deeper was his confusion. He studied the ladies waiting to give their orders for books. They all were stylishly dressed, and seemed cultured and well-read. His eye returned to the typewritten list on the wall.

"They're classics, all right," he granted, "But such classics!"

He got up and went over to the secretary's desk. He would join the library and learn something. He was handed a leaflet which

informed him that the monthly dues were ten dollars, the members having the privilege of drawing each month two books in class one, three in class two, four in class three, and so on; a fine of two dollars a day being imposed for a book kept overtime.

Baxter whistled mentally. "The books must be bound in vellum and gold-tooled!"

He laid ten dollars on the secretary's desk, and after a little telephoning, by means of which his references were authenticated and approved, he was entered in the books as a member of The Rexforth Circulating Library, and credited with one month's paid-up dues.

He did not remove the sealed wrapper from the catalogue that the secretary gave him, but upon being assured by the young lady presiding over the order desk that a copy of Huckleberry Finn was on the library shelves, he had her make out a slip for that classic.

He thought to get his Huckleberry and take it with him — he was in a hurry to have a look at the binding of the volume — but the young lady calmly informed him that the book would be sent around to his address that afternoon by the first delivery. If he would turn to rule seven in the catalogue, he would learn that such was the delivery regime of the library.

"Very well," he said, and left the building. By following downwards for a short distance the narrow but well-paved courtway, then turning to the right along a similar courtway, thence to the left and again to the right, he emerged upon a busy, familiar street, where a number of carriages were waiting, no doubt for patrons of The Rexforth Circulating Library.

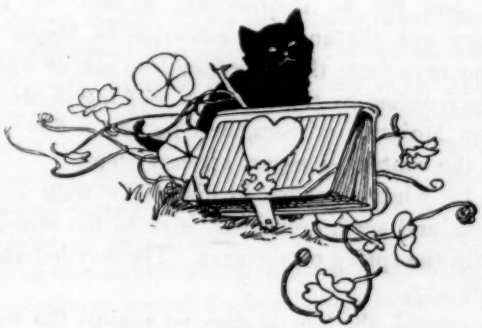
That afternoon a parcel bearing the stamp *Rexforth* was delivered at Baxter's club room. It was of mammoth dimensions for a book, and he began to fear that the librarian had blundered and sent him, instead of a modest octavo by Mark Twain, a folio Shakespeare, if not the ponderous Johnson's dictionary itself. So he nervously undid the wrapping, and there lay before him in a neat paper box a lady's handsome skirt, with some manner of fluffy pink trimmings or flounces, he didn't know which.

He poked gingerly at the dainty garment. "Huckleberry Finn!" he ejaculated. Then a great, big truth leapt up in Bax-

ter's mind, like the grimacing face of a jack-in-the-box, and hastily removing the manilla cover and opening the catalogue he had received at the library, he turned to H. Bracketed with the title of Huckleberry Finn was the description of a lady's fancy ball skirt.

His eye ran over some other book titles, with the things in ladies' dress-wear bracketed against them. Then he sat down weakly. The Rexforth Circulating Library was a woman's dress-renting establishment, where ladies, by paying a certain monthly sum, could "draw" stylish dresses for temporary wear.

Each dress, skirt, waist, or hat, bore the name of some well-known book — a kind of code arrangement for privacy, brevity and convenience — and upon examining his library card Baxter found Mrs. prefixed to his name, the secretary, no doubt, having been under the impression that he had acted for his wife in joining the R. C. L., for that establishment made its appeal exclusively to the gentler sex.



The Ink of Destiny.*

BY WILL KENYON.

"ILL we make it, Mojave girl?" the gaunt man croaked through cracked and blistered lips to his ratty little mule. The man walked, resting his hand affectionately on the mule's withers.

There was no answer save the voice of the rock-strewn desert, empty, vast, seemingly illimitable — the low, fierce purring of intense heat thrown back into the vault of heaven at high noon. It is only at night, in the hour before the dawn stirs the dead air and the stars drowse to sleep, that the desert is really silent; and then it is so still that one can almost hear the swish of worlds through space.

The man's eye was held by a gleaming point of light just beyond the thick, purple splash of shadow cast by a black fang of rock in the distance. He was so tired that curiosity lay dead within him, and yet he instinctively guided the mule to it. Abreast of the rock the angle of reflection no longer turned the sun's blinding rays from the object, and he saw it was a tin canteen, brightly polished by the action of shifting sands. His hand dropped from Mojave's withers, and he ran a few steps in the direction of the canteen — eager, springy steps.

Suddenly he wheeled short in his tracks with a face of anguished terror, and sped, crouching, back to the mule, to leap at the bridle with the spring of a cougar. The startled animal raised her head listlessly.

"Ah," he panted, the tongue clicking against the teeth. "God what a fool!"

He laughed shiverishly, horribly, the gaunt hands shaking like aspens.

"It is damnable to lose faith in you, Mojave," he began apolo-

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getically, "but when I saw those long bones, white as ivory, with a grinning dome at the head, lying beside the empty canteen — of course it's empty! — the bones told me that! — my mind froze with fear." With a shudder of horror he turned, one gaunt arm outstretched to the tragedy. "Do you see, girl? Every drop of water that stands between you and me and the death he died is here on your back, and you — you *might* have bolted. And then — Oh, God!"

In a new accession of fear his grip tightened on the bridle again, and they faced the burning waste anew.

Before, behind, and everywhere, the desert stretched away in miles of fantastic imagery. Hurled by the fierce desert winds the eddying sands had assaulted rocky fang and volcanic debris with insidious agency, the myriad flinty teeth nibbling a bit here, cunningly chiselling an atom there — had sculptured and licked and ground with age-long patience — until the sandy sea now lay islanded with thousands of weird presentments. No corners, no sharp edges; each crumbling rock and basaltic spine pared and smoothed and rounded with geometric precision.

Before the traveller's tortured retinæ these grotesque monoliths, singly and in groups, rose and dipped, advanced and retreated, floated and swam and circled unceasingly in the heat haze of the blistering sands. Their tantalizing resemblance to familiar objects mocked him. The solitude fell in waves, and his burning, fevered eyes cast about the circumference of his visible world for a human touch in the dead landscape. Nothing but heat, thirst and death. Oppressed with utter loneliness, the gaunt man lifted up his voice and cursed, but the vasty barrens made a jest of his impotence and turned his oaths to bitter laughter.

Every laboring step a growing agony, resolutely denied. His mouth was as dry as the whited bones back yonder, the burnished disc in the heavens seared his eyes, and his brain reeled, but the iron spirit refused to submit to the tyranny of environment. On and on, and on he pressed, his padded footfalls inaudible in the awesome immensity.

Another mile traversed — a little eternity. Mojave cut into his soul with a knife of fear, her groaning suspiration voicing an imperative need. They halted in the purple velvet shadow of a pol-

ished tooth of stone, giving promise of coolness in the pitiless furnace heat. Dead Sea fruit — vain hope! The shaded rock seared the touch; the heat smothered as a hand across the face.

He lifted the precious canteens from the pannier, appraising their weight with hands trembling so violently that the tins clanked together with an ominously hollow sound. Panicky fear laid numbing fingers on the man. He straightened to his full height and glared fixedly into the desert, in an effort to pierce beyond the arid confines to where green trees waved, flowers bloomed, and crystal streams purled deliciously over clean, white stones. For a space he stood there motionless, then slowly drooped, crumpling down on himself like a sick child to the inexorable sands.

But the love of life, or what was more compelling, a concentrated purpose in life, was strong within him. The iron will had bent almost to the breaking, only to spring back to normal tension. He rose doggedly and lifted a canteen to the mule's parched mouth, wasting not one drop of the priceless fluid, licking the vessel with caked tongue, and greedily, bestially, taking his full share at the last. His physical being cried fiercely for all, even to the last residuum of moisture, but iron resolve plucked the canteen from his lips.

"No, no, faithful girl," he panted; "you've rights here too, and we go through to the end together, or — the other thing."

Two hours reeled by. Another halt, and the canteens were emptied. They went on. The man's shoes were frayed to tatters, and each step left a tiny crimson stain. His bloodshot eyes were coals of fire in their scorched rims, and parti-colored meteors fulminated across the field of vision. His brain opened and shut in great waves which swirled him to the borderland of consciousness; his gait was staggering and he leaned heavily on the little Mojave, now rolling in her stride and groaning pitifully.

The desert rose gently to a rock-ribbed rim, and the added toil of the ascent cruelly taxed the well-nigh spent travellers. Mojave stopped once, and the fear-frenzied man rained futile blows upon her. After a time the brute moved on of her own accord. Thrice they stopped, the breath of life sucking shallowly, raucously in and out of the channels of respiration. At the third halt the man looked about him dully, the volcanic rim which hedged in the

desert falling dimly on his filmy vision. It danced and capered against a lake of deep turquoise sky.

He turned stiffly and gazed back across the desert, a quivering hell of sand and painted rocks, done in brick-red and umber, and orange, brown, black and yellow, to the distant mountains looming large in a violet haze, from whence he had won thus far. Slowly his eye circled back with quickening perception to the flinty barrier. And then he knew. The desert was passed!

With an inarticulate cry rattling in his throat he plunged forward, to have his legs limply refuse him. He lurched drunkenly against Mojave, clutching her gear to keep from falling. Hope died instantly and his travailing soul gave birth to poignant despair.

On the instant an errant wisp of breeze strayed over the desert rim, blowing cool on his cheek, growing stronger and fresher. Mojave threw her head up into the wind like a startled antelope. She snuffed the current for an instant and with a screaming bray breasted the remaining slope, the exhausted man mechanically retaining his hold on her trappings. A glimpse over the brink made him a man again. There lay a rugged, seamy valley, splashed with vivid green grass and sentinel cottonwoods patrolling the banks of a running stream, winding down in silvery reaches and feather-tipped rapids. Water!

Down they plunged, gasping, sliding, leaping, stumbling, insane with thirst, dead to the cruel stab of rock and root — plunged headlong into the cool, shallow stream. The man fondled the water as a miser caresses his gold; he wallowed in it, kissed it, lapped it up greedily like a dog. In the mighty revulsion of feeling the dried-up wells of his eyes filled again, and he wept.

Such was the progress of Aaron Whipple.

Three things bring a man to such a pass. Lust for gold, love for a woman, and revenge. Aaron Whipple knew not this last, but the other two were inseparably woven into the fabric of his life, a strangely intricate pattern. Lust for gold and love for a woman had carried him far afield to the violet mountains lying behind the fearsome desert, and love for a woman had urged him through twoscore miles of heat, thirst and death to keep his knightly word to that woman.

As he lay there on the dry sands, his blistered feet laving in the refreshing waters of the singing stream, the sun's heat mercifully tempered by grateful breezes, with new strength streaming into every fibre of his being and the gift of life flowing evenly through his veins again — under such strange circumstances this man of iron did the most unexpected thing in the world.

Fumbling with stiffened fingers at the neck of his flannel shirt he drew forth a worn packet of oiled silk, neatly sewn with even stitches; long and round and slender. He placed it in his lap and then searched out a tiny celluloid calendar, a miniature record of the twelvemonth. Each small square allotted to a day had been pierced through with a pin, one every twenty-four hours, until there remained but one intact — that of the last day of the year. This Aaron punctured, and the cycle was complete.

In a fit of sullen wrath he tore the calendar to bits and tossed the ghostly record of a vanished year to the winds, each pinhole the mute testimony of herculean labor; each day an eternity of crushed hope and sterile endeavor.

Turning eagerly to the packet he ripped off the coverings, disclosing a fountain pen, a hard-rubber reservoir of ink, a stamped envelope and several sheets of note paper — strange things to interest a man set down a hundred miles from any known habitation. On one closely written sheet were these words:

DEAR AARON:

To-day you are keeping the compact made one year ago. I wonder where you are and what you are doing — how it fares with you, and, so, with me. God grant that all is well with you, and that the words you are about to pen will bring joy to my heart, faint with the longing, and the waiting, and the dread uncertainty. It was brave of you to challenge fate alone in the wild mountain fastnesses, but rash — Oh, so rash! — to limit yourself to one short year. I have faith in you, Aaron; I believe in your scientific knowledge. But even science may pass by the gold you covet. Don't you see it leaves too much to blind chance?—that you have no right to put me in the balance against Luck?

You don't know how I tremble as I write and make ready my little packet. I call this writing fluid the ink of destiny, and I pray that, for the sake of your pride and for the sake of that thing men call honor, the message you write will be in script of gleaming gold. But whatever comes, whatever fortune brings you, dear, do not deny me because of that foolish compact which binds no one other than yourself. I will wait. Come to me, and we will win out together.

Lovingly, faithfully,

JANET SEWARD.

His fingers closed convulsively on the letter, his head bowed hopelessly, and the darkest hour Aaron Whipple ever knew descended upon him.

Science and trained acuteness had availed him nothing; the everlasting hills had mocked every effort and the glistening sands had laughed and held close their secret hoards of golden grains. Time and time again he had assaulted the flanks of granite mountains, delving with pick and shovel and rude windlass; had burrowed deep in sands of promise, only to abandon and hurry on with renewed hope, leaving a tortuous and pock-marked trail a full thousand miles long, behind him. Bitter defeat lay behind him; before him lay the bitterest thing of them all — the confession of failure to the woman he loved.

But it was to do this very thing that he had walked through the valley of death, and he faced his present, not daring to venture even a little way into the future. Awkwardly filling the pen he tested the broad stub on his thumb-nail — the clerkly habit of years — smoothed out the crisp sheets and composed himself to write, the ink of destiny flowing smoothly in firm, heavy characters.

One page was filled, and Aaron instinctively glanced about for a blotter to take up the surplusage of ink.

"Janet forgot that," he laughed tremulously.

Impatient at the slight delay he took up a handful of fine, powdery sand and sifted it over the letter, as his ancestors had done from time immemorial. The wind whipped away some as it fell, the rest lingering thirstily. Aaron raised the sheet to blow away those fine particles remaining, when suddenly his eye was caught and held by several glistening yellow flecks adhering to line and dot and character.

"Gold! Gold!" he screamed, his eyes a-glitter with the prospector's lust. "Gold! Janet's prayer — *in script of gleaming gold.* It can't be true. Dear God, don't flout me now!"

Leaping to his feet, unmindful of the exquisite agony, he caught up a gold-pan from his camp utensils, scooped it full of sand and waded into the running stream. Dipping the pan in the water he rocked it with the miner's peculiar cradling motion, tilting so that the lighter stuff flowed out with the waste, the heavier particles